

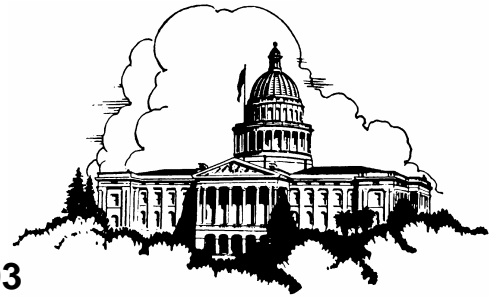
FROM

SENATOR

**RICO OLLER**

1<sup>ST</sup> SENATE DISTRICT

Covering 12 California Counties



February 13, 2003



## DISABILITY RIGHTS UPDATE

*New Legislation Introduced to Aid Disabled Drivers*

Senator Rico Oller (R-San Andreas) will introduce legislation designed to grant new and unprecedented rights to all disabled drivers in California. The Senator is proposing better access for all disabled Californians through a change in state law governing the use of "High Occupancy Vehicle" (HOV) lanes or "Diamond Lanes." Senator Oller's legislation would permit individuals with California disabled license plates or placards to use the lanes, which are currently reserved for carpool use only.

### Change Means "Win-Win" for Commuters



The proposal from Senator Oller will help all commuters in California, as well as the state's disabled population. Disabled drivers often face greater challenges on the road according to federal statistics, and often require special equipment. The proposed change in California law would extend a new set of benefits for the state's disabled population.

### Disability Change Aids Carpool Efforts

A 1995 U.S. Department of Transportation Personal Transportation Survey finds the number of commuters carpooling to work declined by 19 percent during the 1980's. Senator Oller's proposed change would lead to greater use of the often-empty carpool lanes.

### Congestion Problems Getting Worse

A report from the LAO concludes that congestion on the state highway system has increased at an annual rate of 10 percent since 1995, and nearly half of the state's freeways are suffering from congestion problems. The problem is worse in urban areas like Sacramento and Los Angeles Counties, where between 60 to 80 percent of freeway lane miles are congested.

### A Waste of Taxpayer Dollars

The California Department of Transportation has spent close to \$2.3 billion in taxpayer dollars on the construction of HOV or "carpool only" lanes, even though the use of these lanes has been decreasing steadily for over a decade.

#### Precedent for Change

Other states are looking at changes to the federally mandated HOV Program. In Tennessee, legislation was introduced in 1999 to allow motorists to use HOV lanes as passing lanes.

### Proposed Change Benefits All Drivers

The change in California law would increase the use of the often-empty HOV lanes by expanding the number of commuters who may actually use them. It's hoped the change will relieve congestion in other areas.

### Disabled Prevented From Carpooling

California's disabled citizens are often prevented from taking part in carpool efforts because they rely on special equipment that can be bulky and difficult to carry. Indeed, many vehicles designed for disabled use do not allow for additional passengers, making carpool efforts impossible.

Email Your Concerns to Senator Oller at: [senator.oller@sen.ca.gov](mailto:senator.oller@sen.ca.gov)